WOLF-FERRARI'S INSPIRATION

"LA VITA NUOVA" AND THE POETRY OF DANTE.

The Spirit of the Avant Couriers of the Renaissance Comprehended by a Musician Twenty-five Years Old—Mr. Surette's Endeavors to Make People Appreciate Music as Well as Enjoy It.

The Oratorio Society has been venturesome of late. In two seasons it has brought forward two interesting novelties. Last winter it made known Gabriel Pierné's The "Crusade of the Children" and this winter it has produced Wolf-Ferrari's "La Vita Nuova." For some unexplained reason the first performance of Pierné's music was attended by an audience much larger than that which was present on Wednesday evening when the Wolf-Ferrari composition was sung. If the former had displeased the patrons of the oratorio concerts it would be easy to understand why people absented themselves from the production of this season's novelty.

But the record shows that "The Crusade of the Children" was a popular success and had to be accorded a second performance. Can it be possible that the frivolous and indolent operatic public is going to outdo the serious oratorio patrons? Certainly the operagoers are much less timid in regard to novelties than they were in earlier years. Maurice Grau used to say that all he had to do to make sure that he would have a bad house was to put on a novelty.

Every one then stayed at home to wait until some one else said it was good. But now the public rushes to the subscription books in the spring long before even the Intendant of the Metropolitan knows what he is going to bring forward. When the novelties are mounted in the following fall people actually go to find out whether they are going to like them or not.

If this public does not take "La Vita Nuova" into its affections it will be a sorry comment on the state of taste. This cantata is not only a newly written work but it is strikingly original, eloquent and beautiful. Its style is brilliant, yet dignified and poetic. It is a lovely and communicative setting of some of the most touching passages in Dante's history of his love for Beatrice, a theme which has warmed human hearts for six centuries.

Wolf-Ferrari has utilized all the resources of the music of to-day and yet has not surrounded the thought of the poet with a foreign atmosphere. Purity, propriety and clarity are prominent features of his composition. The melodic style is lofty and yet winning and the handling of mass effects often reaches imposing climaxes. It will be a great pity if this work is allowed to sleep after a single hearing.

If, however, it is laid aside we may be certain that its neglect will be only temporary. Such a composition cannot tarry on the librarian's shelf. It is too rich in communicative power, too splendidly endowed with that magic spell which reaches all hearts. Beside it some of the more labored and pretentious choral compositions which have been heralded through the world with many trumpetings in recent years must be content with secondary positions. Some of them smell of the theatre; others of the midnight oil.

This work is saturated with the spirit of the poem on which it founded. In that trait it bears an artistic resemblance to the "Dream of Gerontius" of Elgar. This writer has no knowledge of the length of time which young Wolf-Ferrari took in building this notable composition, nor whether the composer, like Elgar, had for years lived with the text of the poet.

But his music makes the impression of an art work conceived in a long cherished love and elaborated with a devotion little short of worship. It is perhaps not hazardous to conclude that this ardent young musician, fired with the impulses of his Italian blood and guided by the reflective and analytical tendencies native to his German ancestry, found himself at an early age in most intimate spiritual sympathy with Dante's gigantic masterpiece, which has been credited with moulding and setting in tangible form the chaotic elements of the Italian language itself.

From the "Divina Commedia," that poem in which Dante declared he would say of Beatrice such things as had never been said of woman, Wolf-Ferrari must have obtained the first inspiration for the musical setting of the "Vita Nuova." The greater poem of the Italian master, with its marvellous survey of the entire culture of its time, its encyclopædic review of the philosophy, history, science, morals and theology of "the age of faith in the west," as Draper calls it, inflamed the mind of the musician even while it persuaded him of its own impossibility as a musical topic.

Episodes in it indeed have made music with which the world would not care to part, but evidently this young composer was seeking for some fundamental platform on which he might set a musical exposition of the spirit of Dante. This platform he found in the record in which the great Italian set forth the beginning of his passion for Beatrice, the inspiration of all his future work. A singularly happy selection this was, too, for the musician, for the reason that the "Vita Nuova" is the expression of one mighty impulse that made a life, and a life, too, which was destined to become a living power through all time. Music is the tongue of love and Wolf-Ferrari centred his study on the proclamation of a love which made a literature, a love which has been cherished in history and song as the sublimest exemplar of unselfish pure and uplifting devotion.

By what processes the composer was led to decide on the style of embodiment for this thought the present writer does not know, but certain things seem clear. The merely material investiture of the idea was bound to be vocal and that carried with it the necessity of choral treatment in the utilization of passages in the text referring to the utterances from on high.

But the musical style is quite another matter. In it we find a remarkable commingling of long established forms with modern manner. Whether the composer considered it or not, there is in this union a peculiar and lovely fitness.

Dante with Petrarch and Boccaccio was one of the avant couriers of the Renaissance in Italy. All three were classicists in the best sense of the word. Boccaccio was a master of Greek as well as of Latin. All three founded their culture on the study of ancient writers. All of them wrote works in Latin, which in their own day were regarded as of the utmost importance and on which each of them hoped that his future fame would rest.

Each of them in his turn cast aside the artifice of ancient tongues and composed in the language of his people the works which have come down the centuries with the breath of everlasting life. What was the underlying cause of this?

If history is not mistaken, it was the first stirring of that spirit of liberty which in Italy smote off the shackles of custom and the chains of authority while more northern Europe was still slumbering in the sensual dreams of the Middle Ages. Before the end of the thirteenth century Italy began to show leanings toward individuality. While northern Europe was still herded in the solidarity of race Italy began to give free rein to the individuality of person. The fourteenth century Italian acted according to his own fancy. He even dressed as he pleased. In Florence there was no fashion. Dress was a matter of personal whim or taste.

The dread power of despotism, too, had its beneficent effect in that it forced men in upon themselves, upon their inner lives for their satisfaction with existence, for the exercise of impulses fettered and dumbed in the dangerous political activities of the city and the State. Even the bitter punishment of banishment often served to bring to the surface noble artistic imaginings which prosperity had held in silence.

Dante said, "My country is the whole world." When his recall to Florence was offered him on conditions he could not accept he wrote, "Can I not everywhere behold the light of the sun and the stars, everywhere meditate on the noblest truths, without appearing ingloriously and shamefully before the city and the people?" Ghiberti cried, "Only he who has learned everything is nowhere a stranger. Robbed of his means and his friends he is yet the citizen of every country and can fearlessly despise the changes of fortune."

This splendid independence of the literary and artistic minds of Italy led the way to the Rennaisance, for in the search after the highest in art and literature these students looked beyond their own mountains and seas. They went back to antiquity, of which their country was at once a cradle and a grave.

Whether Wolf-Ferrari carried to his composition of "La Vita Nuova" a consideration of these historical facts or not his music, with its beautiful marriage of ancient and modern features, the chaste classicism of some of its episodes standing side by side with the flaming modernity of others is admirably suited to the embodiment of the literary style of Dante. It is seldom indeed that a choral composition unites a satisfying proclamation of the underlying emotion of a text with an exquisite artistic appropriateness of style.

In this achievement we have a triumphant demonstration of this young composer's artistic sensibility. In the conception of the musical themes capable of expressing the emotional content of the text we have evidence of his inspiration; in his selection of a manner of developing and garbing those themes we perceive a poetic feeling and a technical ability far and away beyond the level of youthful enthusiasm. It is in this that the greater proof of his mastership lies.

The conception is involuntary; the development is the work of art. That Wolf-Ferrari should have had fine ideas at the age of 25 encourages the hope that the world has been enriched by the advent of a new genius. But the production of "La Vita Nuova" makes it absolutely certain that a bountiful Providence has given us a new artist.

Thomas Whitney Surette, he of the ten thousand lectures, and Daniel Gregory Mason have been making a book on the appreciation of music. It is in one volume only, and not a very large volume at that. How ever did they do it? A book on the enjoyment of music might be written in a hundred words, for every one enjoys it in his own way. But appreciation is quite another thing. The poets, for example, have had a good deal to say about music, and they have said it right prettily, but it very seldom means anything. It is not unlike some of the outbursts of the passionate press agent. There is a new quartet in town, not the Kneisel, and the first sound upon its bugle horn contained this sonorous sentence:

"As one man they respond to tempo and nuance with capricious gracefulness."

Now would not that read well in a morning comment after the first concert? Surely it would, and many people would think that it meant that the quartet played very well indeed. But as a matter of fact it does not mean anything at all. A trio or quartet or orchestra does not "respond to" tempo any more than it responds to a modulation from major to minor. No more can it respond to nuance. But if it did respond to either of these in any manner which could be described as capricious things would surely go to pieces in that performance.

The truth is that the press agent had a dim and wavering notion that there had to be "something doing" about tempo and nuance and he let it go at that. But he was in no way worse than the average listener to music. For example, this chronicler of musical incidents once found it impossible to attend six performances in a single day. So he sought for help. He was told that a certain Mr. Prosit was an expert on piano playing and could hear a piano recital for him. Mr. Prosit was accordingly invited to listen and report to the chronicler. He did so in the following words:

"He played very well. I enjoyed it very much."

"Um," remarked the chronicler, "how did he play the sonata with which he began?"

"He played it very well indeed."

The chronicler looked at Mr. Prosit and Mr. Prosit looked at the chronicler. Then the latter said:

"But, my dear sir, you must not stop by telling me that he played well. You must tell me how he played well."

But that was just what Mr. Prosit could not do.

The so-called appreciation of music is confined to a small number of people in any community. The enjoyment of it is spread among many. Captivating melody always finds ready ears. Artistic development of a melodic idea is lost upon nine out of ten listeners. That is one reason why opera is so much more popular than other forms of music. The tunes are presented in their simplest form. Even in the music drama with leit motif machinery the repetitions of the motives are nearly always in the original form, and when a change is made it is an elementary one and so accentuated and explained by the action that it cannot escape the notice of any one but a box holder.

At the opera one who keeps his ears open hears a vast amount of childish chatter about the singers, but seldom any intelligent comment on the operas themselves. Yet this city has a large and substantial body of musical connoisseurs, and it is growing larger every year. There are five audiences which contain the inner brotherhood of music appreciaters in New York. They are those which attend the concerts of the Kneisel Quartet, the Boston and New York Symphony orchestras, the Musical Art Society and the Philharmonic. In the cases of the New York Symphony Society and the Philharmonic only the Saturday night audiences are meant. The percentage of critical listeners, too, is small in the Saturday afternoon audiences of the Boston orchestra.

But in the evenings the entertainments of these organizations are attended by people who know whether they like a new symphony or quartet and why they do so. They can tell whether a composition has form or not, whether it is well made or not, whether it has strength or merely plangency. Now it is safe to say that nearly all of the people who go to these concerts also go to the opera, but in the home of theatrical music they constitute but a small fraction of any single audience and their appreciation is swallowed up in the unreasoning enjoyment which follows the emission of big tones by human throats.

And yet in the main this public rarely goes astray even in the matter of opera. It may not as a whole be expert in analyzing works of art, and it does not have to be. That is the business of the professional critic, who, as has so often been said, sits as a judge and expounds the law. But the public is the jury and it makes its verdicts with the simple aid of that plain good sense which in the vast majority of cases guides unskilled men of the marketplace through the tangles of legal complications to just conclusions.

Some years ago a London newspaper in reviewing a book intended to assist lovers of music toward an intelligent method of listening declared that English amateurs were not in need of instruction of that variety. This was news indeed. Ill informed persons had long been under the delusion that a public which revelled in ballad concerts and still believed Mendelssohn to be one of the supreme men in music needed considerable enlightenment. But whether it was true or not of the admirable British public it cannot be said that music lovers in this young and growing country are not in want of information as to the real basis of musical art.

Therefore let us welcome the endeavors of Mr. Surette and his partner to pour light into dark places. It is saddening to sit through some performances in this town and observe the dead level of approval bestowed upon excellence and incompetency without the slightest discrimination.

Newspaper chroniclers, who are said to be dyspeptic and ill natured, are continually recording the fact that "the audience appeared to enjoy the performance," or "the applause was abundant and hearty." Such records are made out of sheer pity for the unfortunate creatures who have embarked upon careers for which they have not the slightest calling.

In truth the observers ought to be penning a few pointed words of censure to these audiences for bestowing their approval on such doings, but it would be presumptuous for commentators to criticise the public. Yet, as this writer has said before, when every person in the audience is a critic every person on the stage will be an artist.

W. J. HENDERSON.

NOTES OF MUSIC EVENTS.

The programme for the coming week at the Manhattan Opera House is as follows: Monday night, "Pagliacci," Basi, Sammarco and Zeppilli, and "La Navarraise," Gerville-Réache, Dalmores and Gilibert. Wednesday, "Ernani," Russ, Bassi, Ancona and Arimondi. Friday, "Thais," with the usual cast, and Saturday afternoon the same programme as on Monday night. Saturday night, "Faust," Zeppilli, Zenatello, Ancona and Didur.

The announcements for the next week at the Metropolitan Opera House are these: Monday, "Mefistofele," Farrar, Challapine and Martin. Wednesday, "Iris," with the same cast as heretofore. Thursday, "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," Sembrich, Bonci, Campanari and Challapine. Friday, "Der Fliegende Holländer," with the same cast as before. Saturday afternoon, "Madama Butterfly," Farrar, Caruso and Scotti. Saturday evening, "La Bohème," Sembrich, Bonci, Stracciari and Journet.

The next concert of the Russian Symphony Society will take place on Thursday evening at Carnegie Hall. The soloist will be Alfred von Glehn, 'cellist. The principal orchestra number will be Arensky's first symphony.

Rafael Navas will give a piano recital at Mendelssohn Hall on Wednesday night.

Augusta Cottlow will give a piano recital in Mendelssohn Hall on Thursday evening for the benefit of the MacDowell fund.

Arthur Whiting will give a recital on piano and harpsichord at Mendelssohn Hall on Wednesday afternoon.

Anne Roberts will give a song recital at Mendelssohn Hall to-morrow afternoon.

Herbert Witherspoon, basso, will give a song recital at Mendelssohn Hall on Thursday afternoon.

An interesting event of next week will be a joint recital at Mendelssohn Hall on Tuesday afternoon by Mr. and Mrs. William James Baird, two Philadelphia vocalists. They will be assisted by Mlle. Ada Sassoli, harp, and George Barrere, flute. Arthur Rosenstein will assist at the piano.

The last recital that Paderewski will give in New York, at least until late in the spring, will take place in Carnegie Hall on next Saturday afternoon, December 14, at 2:30 o'clock. Mr. Paderewski has prepared for this a new programme, which will be announced a little later.

The programme for the concerts of the Philharmonic Society next Friday afternoon and Saturday evening at Carnegie Hall contains some features of unusual interest. The second part of Berlioz's sacred trilogy, "The Childhood of Christ," will be performed by the orchestra, the Bach Society of Montclair and Daniel Beddoe, tenor. Ernest Schelling, the American pianist, will make his first appearance this year, playing Chopin's concerto in F minor in the arrangement made in about 1894 by Richard Burmeister. Scriabine's symphony in E major will conclude the concert.

THE SILENT LETTER.

Not an H in This Case, but an M Formed by Football Enthusiasts.

For the recent football game with the University of Pennsylvania the rooters at the University of Michigan conceived a good idea in silent cheering.

Certain men in the grand stand at a signal raised yellow flags. The others raised blue flags.

The figure thus outlined was a yellow M on a blue field. This was done every once in a while with tremendous effect.

At football games on the Coast the Stanford students frequently made an S in white by means of white caps on the heads of certain of the students, but the movable varsity letter belongs to Michigan.

Japs Never Take Cold.

From the Chicago Tribune.

With the approach of chilly weather people are becoming fearful lest they should take cold after a hot bath, but this opinion is unable to reconcile itself with the immunity of the Japanese from colds.

The ordinary bath consists of a large wooden tub, oval in shape and fitted with a cover. Before he enters the tub the bather thoroughly lathers himself from head to foot and washes the suds off by means of a wooden ladle or dipper. He then sits in the tub, immersed up to his chin, for several minutes, enduring a degree of heat by which a European would be well nigh parboiled.

When Japan first began to study the methods of Western nations the excessive heat of the baths was strongly condemned and a law was made that the water in the public baths should be only moderately heated. This caused great discontent, so a committee composed of European and Japanese medical men was appointed to decide the question. The verdict was in favor of the national custom, which was pronounced to be not only harmless but beneficial.

The high temperature of the water was said to open the pores of the skin thoroughly, even without the use of soap, and a healthy action of the skin and cleanliness were secured which it was impossible to get with any amount of washing in cold or so-called hot baths.

FULL DRESS COATS BRAIDED

THE SEASON'S NOVELTY IN MEN'S EVENING WEAR.

Attempt to Use Dark Blue Cloth—Gray Permissible for Dinner Coats—Details of Perfection in Man's Attire for Evening—The Opera Hat and the Overcoat.

There is no test of the well dressed man more exacting than the attire for evening. Of that every detail must be perfect. Black and white is the only permissible color scheme, and cut and material decide whether or not the result has been properly achieved.

The present tendency to make men's dress elaborate has had its effect on the evening suits of men. Braid now covers the morning as well as the frock coat when the neglected garment is worn. It made its reappearance on the cutaway or morning coats two seasons ago. It became so popular immediately that the frock, the dinner coat and now the evening coat have succumbed to its decorative influence.

This does not mean that every evening coat should be trimmed with braid. Many of those made by the smartest tailors do not show any of this trimming. But there has been an effort to make the braided evening suits the novelty of the winter in this particular style of dress.

Perhaps the most unconventional novelty is the dark blue evening dress which has so far figured chiefly in the tailor's fashion plates, although a few specimens were seen at the Horse Show in the crowd of nobodies that parade around the ring and stare into the boxes that contain somebodies.

The shade of blue used is so dark as to pass almost as black, and in this respect it resembles the dark plum color which was suggested several years ago as a substitute for the conventional hue. No effort to change the color of evening dress gets far from the accustomed sable.

The materials in demand for evening wear still show a tendency to remain dull in finish and moderately rough. All high finish is avoided, as the material grows shiny quickly enough.

While the material for the dinner coat may be of gray, the dress suit must be inky black. Nothing better for this use can be found than the dressed and undressed worsteds, which excelsin looks and durability.

The increasing recognition of the dinner

GOOD FORM EVENING DRESS SHOWING NEW STYLE INVERNESS COAT

coat as a very informal garment has made the gray material to be used in them much more in demand. These rough English cloths vary in tone from a black with only a fine gray thread running through it to a pronounced gray with a pattern in the weave or with a herringbone stripe, overplaid or diamond pattern.

These designs are, of course, inconspicuous and visible only on close scrutiny. Similar indistinct patterns are sometimes found in the worsteds for evening dress, and are even less conspicuous on the very black ground.

The dress coat shows one adherence to foreign styles found in no other fashion for men. Here all the coats are still made loose. The well cut coat according to New York ideas is close at the shoulders and nowhere else.

In England, on the contrary, tailors are following a fashion that originated on the Continent of cutting coats tight to the figure. This influence has been manifested only in the imported clothes.

It is proper to have dress coats fit snugly in the waist and over the hips. Another difference in the style for this year is that the front of the coat is more cut away in order to reveal the waistcoat, which has gradually become a more important part of evening dress, both formal and informal.

It can scarcely be said that the peaked collar which is seen on all modish dress coats this winter is a manifestation of the present season. The roll or shawl collar on evening dress passed out of favor several years ago.

Both on the dinner coat and the full evening dress strictest adherence to style demands the pointed collar, but the wearer with a determination to have a shawl collar one way or another may with propriety have it on a dinner coat. Padded shoulders are also a thing of the past, and the best tailors insist on leaving the shoulders the natural width, which is rough on narrow shouldered men, but the style.

The sleeve of the dress coat is finished with a false cuff which closes with one button at the edge. The dinner coat on the other hand has the full turn back cuff, which is rarely more than an inch and a half in width and is not to be made of the same silk as that which lines the peaks, although some tailors have tried to introduce this flashy innovation. If there is no turn back cuff on the dinner coat sleeve the false cuff may have as many as three or four buttons and not be too exaggerated in style.

When braid is used on the dinner coat it not only extends along the edge of the collar but runs down to the bottom of the coat. As a vagary of this year's fashion of so much braid, none is put on the trousers when it is used on the coat. For years it has been customary to finish the outside seam of all trousers with a braid, sometimes in an elaborate design. Now the trousers are plain when braid is used on the coat.

More attractive than these braid edged coats are the peak collared garments, covered with satin to the edges and having no suggestion of braid anywhere but on the trousers. That may not be the last cry of chic, as the French would say, but it is the most tasteful and one least likely to pall on the wearer who is not able to invest in a new dress suit every year.

In detail the dress coat of the year avoids extremities. The skirt or tails are of moderate length and only three buttons are used on the fore body. There are buttons at the top of the tails, and the snug fit tends to emphasize the outline of the figure. The trousers are of medium width, becoming narrower at the ankle.

The white linen or mercerized cotton waistcoats are the smartest, and they now have rarely more than three buttons, are cut to a V in the bosom and are still ending in two points. The patterns of these may match the shirt front, but it is a better style to have under all circumstances a plain shirt front.

A dealer on Fifth avenue has been making this winter plaited waistcoats to go with the plaited shirt fronts now worn with dinner coats.

There have been few plaited shirts seen at the opera this year, although men who have their shirts made in Paris brought some of them back and were assured that they were completely full dress. They have not become popular here, and the man who appeared with a plaited shirt and a plaited waistcoat as full evening dress would find himself conspicuous.

The best style of waistcoat has three buttons, is made of white duck or linen, and above all fits well. The buttons are made of the same material as the stude, or may even be covered with white material similar to the waistcoat and be quite as much in style.

All the white waistcoats for wear with full evening dress are supplied with collars, while those for wear with dinner coats are collarless. The various silks and mercerized cottons used for the fancy waistcoats now a detail of the dinner coat are usually provided with three buttons, ball shaped and made of agate, stonsine or enamelled wood to correspond in shade to the material of the waistcoat. The prevailing shade of these waistcoats is gun metal or some tint of gray.

With his shirt, his coat and his waistcoat according to the best models there is little chance for the well dressed man to go astray. In details he may carry still further the exhibition of his taste and knowledge.

In his shoes, for instance, he may go so far wrong as to nullify his other excellencies. For wear at dinners, dances and all full dress occasions the only appropriate shoe is the pump. As that may seem to some men too formal for evening wear at the theatre, and the pump is not comfortable for walking, a buttoned high patent leather boot is admissible.

This is better style with the usual cap, although there are still many conventional dressers who believe that the only appropriate footwear for full dress on all occasions is a kid top with a patent leather shoe having no tip. This may have been smart in early Victorian days, but nowadays fashion has decreed that only the pump shall be worn. It is still the most popular style of shoe at the opera.

With the pump should be worn silk socks, which do not admit of any color, although black with gray and white patterns are in good style. For wear at home with a dinner coat the line against color need not be so carefully drawn, and there is ample opportunity for the wearer's play of fancy and imagination in colors and combinations.

The useful and convenient opera hat seems to be a thing of the past. One wears only the silk hat with its customary band about an inch and a half deep.

New Yorkers have not yet accustomed themselves to the foreign habit of always carrying a cane with evening dress. The silver headed walking stick is regarded as just as indispensable to evening dress as the silk hat in Europe. The men who carry them usually have the round stick surmounted with a silver head.

For ordinary evening wear the heavy white dogskin glove is most appropriate, although men who are going to a dance seldom care to take the trouble to carry an extra pair of gloves with them, so they start out with the light weight glove they expect to wear all evening.

For the theatre and opera, where gloves are to be worn all the time, the heavier kid is more generally seen. Prudent men protect them on trolleys and elsewhere with mitts.

The white lawn or linen tie admits of very little change, the most important thing about that detail of dress being the necessity of tying it one's self and tying it well.

This winter the best New York tailors have made a determined attempt to revive the Inverness coat as a garment for dress wear. There was a time when this pattern of coat enjoyed great popularity, but that passed nearly fifteen years ago.

There is one serious drawback to that style of coat for this climate. It is entirely unsuited to cold weather. The very peculiarities that make it appropriate to evening dress also render it unfit for wear in any but the mildest weather.

It slips easily off and on and takes up little space in an opera box or a dressing room. But its flowing sleeves also serve to open it to all the cold breezes and make it too light and airy for night wear during a New York winter.

Less classic in style but intended for evening wear is the ulster finished with a velvet collar and lined to the edge with silk. This is of course a compromise that tends to make serve for dress occasions the sort of garment which from its nature is intended for something entirely different. Made of an ordinary rough material this overcoat would be no more than an ulster unsuited for evening dress; made up in handsome materials and finished carefully it serves for dress occasions as well as for daytime use.

The best dressed man in every detail, however, is he who can put on with his evening dress perfect in every particular a fur coat of suitable quality. Then he has gained sartorial perfection or something near it.

POSTMEN'S WALKING FEATS.

Distance Travelled by Men Long in British Mail Service.

From the Westminster Gazette.

There must be few, even among "men of letters," who, like Joseph Hunt, a Lincolnshire postman, can claim to have tramped a distance of, roughly, 240,000 miles, not much less than the equivalent of ten journeys around the earth.

Not long ago George Thompson retired from service as postman in the Langrick district of Yorkshire, after covering on foot 125,000 miles in twenty-six years of letter carrying, a service fourteen years shorter than that of his Lincolnshire rival.

In thirty-four years Orme M. Brown walked 111,000 miles as postman between Cupar and Kilmany and Logie—a distance, as was stated at the appropriate presentation to him of an easy chair, nearly equal to half that which separates the moon from the earth.

John Simmonds of Henley-on-Thames retired with a record of 181,000 miles of fair "heel and toe," the result of forty years tramping; while most amazing of all, Thomas Phipps, a postman in the Chipping Norton district, was credited with an aggregate journey of 440,000 miles between the years 1840 and 1898.

The Misplaced Comma.

From the Baltimore American.

"Some lawsuits of the highest importance have hinged upon the right placing of a comma," said Judge F. C. Downing of St. Louis.

"When I first started to practise law a Missouri editor came to me in a peck of trouble to defend him against a threatened libel suit growing out of faulty punctuation. He had not meant to give some innocent young women the slightest offence when he wrote a story about 'two young men who went with their girls to attend a lecture and after they left, the girls got drunk.' Putting that miserable little comma out of its right place did the work, as it made the girls the ones who became inebriated instead of their escorts. I managed by proper diplomacy and the publication of a neat apology to stave off the damage suits, and afterward my editorial friend became an expert on punctuation."

NOTES OF MUSIC ABROAD

MME. NEVADA TO MAKE HER FIRST APPEARANCE.

Felix Mottl to Introduce Many Novelties at Munich—Hans Winkelmann, Son of the Tenor, as "Lohengrin"—Two Famous Women Singers Who Have Just Died.

There is already another Mme. Nevada. This is Mignon Nevada, daughter of the famous American prima donna, who will this winter make her first appearance in Rome as *Rosina*. She received her musical education from her mother.

Enrico Toselli, the young Italian pianist who married the Countess Montignoso, has reconsidered his refusal to appear on the concert stage and accepted the offer of an impresario who will introduce him first in Germany during this month. His hesitation has cost him money, as the interest in the marriage has diminished. The impresario who offered him $3,000 a concert immediately after the marriage has considerably reduced that sum. His wife will not accompany him on his tour, but remains with her husband's parents in Florence. Signor Toselli will devote his concerts exclusively to his own compositions.

Romualdo Marenco, the Italian violinist and composer of "Excelsior," has just been taken to an insane asylum in Milan and is penniless. He has supported himself during recent years by giving instruction on the violin. Marenco never repeated the success of "Excelsior," although he composed several ballets afterward. "Sport," which he also did for La Scala, was the most successful of any of his later works.

It is not surprising that opera flourishes in Italy when the township of Palermo can vote $10,000 for the benefit of an impresario as well as illuminating his theatre gratuitously.

Hans Winkelmann, a son of the tenor of the same name, has just made his first appearance as *Lohengrin* in an Austrian city. He promises to have as distinguished a career as his father, who was for twenty-five years at the Imperial Opera House in Vienna and created several of the most important rôles in the Wagner operas.

Carl Goldmark's Shakespearian opera "A Winter's Tale" will be produced late in the present month at Vienna, although in accordance with the composer's promise the first production will be made in Budapest.

Felix Mottl has again shown that he is the most liberal of German conductors by his repertory for the coming season at the Royal Opera House in Munich. The novelties will be "Don Quixote," by Beer-Walbrusen; "Donna Diana," by Reznicek; "Pélléas and Mélisande," by Debussy; "Moloch," by Schilling, and Eugen d'Albert's "Tiefland." Among his revivals are to be "The Barber of Seville," "Il Seraglio," Liszt's dramatic legend "St. Elisabeth," Glück's "Orfeo" and Verdi's old "La Forza del Destino."

Max Vogrich, who lived for many years in New York and went abroad several years ago to find a production for his operas, has succeeded at last. His "Buddha" has been sung in Weimar, but without great success. Recently Mr. Vogrich gave the work in concert form in Berlin, and there was little more critical approval.

Franz Lehar, who composed "The Merry Widow," has been compelled by his physicians to go to a hospital to recover from nervous prostration. He has abandoned his plan of travelling through Germany to give concerts of his compositions. Ernst Schuch has just celebrated his sixtieth birthday in Dresden. The Bayreuth Festival management has announced that all the seats for the performances next summer have been disposed of.

Théâtre Champs Elysées is to be the name of the new opera house which Gabriel Astruc is trying to build for Paris. Much American money has been subscribed for it. It is the pet scheme of the Baroness Grefuhle, who is the leader of musical society in Paris. The performances are to be international and among other promised attractions is the entire company from the Prinz Regent Theatre in Munich to sing the Nibelungen Ring in German. Then there will be model performances of Italian opera. The theatre will be opened in two years. It was Gabriel Astruc who, with Baroness Grefuhle's help, carried through the "Salome" performance in Paris.

Pauline Donalda, who succeeded Mary Garden at the Opéra Comique, has appeared there with great success as *Manon*. She will remain throughout the season.

Two noted singers have just died in Paris. One of them was Marie Sasse, whom Meyerbeer selected to create the rôle of *Selika* when "L'Africaine" was sung. She was a French woman born in Paris and made her first appearances as a singer in a café chantant. She appeared first at the Opéra in 1860 as *Alice* in "Robert le Diable" and later sang the first performances of "L'Africaine," although Pauline Lucca's later triumphs in that rôle eclipsed the fame of Sasse outside of Paris. She remained at the Opéra until the early '70s, when she lost her voice and began to teach. She was the wife of Arnold Castelmary, who died on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House, and came with him once to this country. Victor Maurel was a member of the same company. She was dependent on charity at the time of her death as she had never been successful as a teacher.

Sophie Cruvelli, who had been her predecessor at the Opéra and had also sung a number of the Wagner rôles, died the day after Marie Sasse. She was much more eminent in her day and conquered all the lands in which she sang. At the age of 55 she returned to the stage to take part in the first performance of Wagner's "Lohengrin" ever given in Paris. It was given in private and she bore all the expenses in order to introduce the composer to the Paris world of music. She had a trumpet choir brought from Prague and the chorus from Covent Garden. Crevelli was a German, her real name being Cruwell, and she was born in Bielfeld in 1826. Her mother was a professional singer and so was her older sister, who soon lost her voice on account of insufficient schooling. Crevelli made her first success in Venice and was engaged to sing in London, where she made her first appearance as the *Countess* in "The Marriage of Figaro." She was not satisfactory in vocalization and returned to Italy. When she went to the Paris Opéra, where she was the first *Elvira* of "Ernani," her salary was fixed at 100,000 francs a year, which shows how much better off were the French singers of that day. In 1856 she married and retired. Her later days were spent in her château at Nice. Antonia Mielke, who supplanted Lilli Lehmann for one season at the Metropolitan, recently died in Berlin. She was 53 and retired from the Berlin Opera, where she went in 1892, six years ago. She never recovered from a fall sustained in the first act of "Lohengrin." She was lifted on the shield and allowed to fall through an accident.

LIFE OF A WASHERWOMAN

Not Very Gay When She Supported a Sick Husband on $1.50 a Day.

A New York man took a notion to interview his washerwoman about the cost of living. She earns $1.50 a day and supports a sick husband. The man reports results in the *American Magazine*.

"Our washwoman dreads Sundays and holidays," he says. "To her such days mean no pay. She was glad to come and wash for us on the Fourth of July.

"All summer she worked every Sunday in a hotel—from noon until 11 at night. In two years she has not had a day of what we call fun—no theatre going, no trip to Coney Island.

"She seldom has company at her home in the evening. And she is glad of it. She is busy, and company takes up time. Besides she meets people and talks with them while she is at her work.

"Now about clothing. In all, only $11.50 has been laid out in money in a year for clothing for both the husband and the wife. By far the greater part of the clothing they have given to them by employers and others.

"The wife has no relatives or near friends in this country. The husband has no relatives or friends who could give him a dollar if he needed it.

"So I asked the wife how much money she ever has in hand at any one time. She replied that for two or three years she has never had more than $12 at any one time."

COFFEE IN FRANCE.

Many Persons Drink a Quart a Day—Habit Common Among Women.

Dr. Fernet, an eminent French physician, is quoted by the *British Medical Journal* as authority for the statement that the use of coffee has increased in France to such an extent that it is now common for the people of that country to drink a quart or more of a decoction of coffee daily. The habit is especially common among laboring women, great numbers of whom are received at the hospitals for treatment for disorders solely attributable to it.

Walks Five Miles to School.

From the Philadelphia Record.

While the ordinary boy is spending his out of school hours playing, William Harris, a nine-year-old lad, who lives on Whiskey road, half a mile out of Merchantville, spends three hours every day walking to and from school. The Harris family are Catholics, and as there is no parochial school in Merchantville the boy trudges to Camden. It is five miles each way, and the boy walks the ten miles in three hours. This morning the snow interfered with his custom, and he used a trolley car.

There is not enough money allowed William to pay his carfare and keep some for himself, so he would rather walk and save 50 cents a week. The lad has made many friends along the route of his daily journey, who urge him along with cheery greetings.